

gets back home to the folks in our home communities before it stays here in Washington, because if it stays here very long it is going to get spent. We are committed to seeing that it goes back to the people of this country.

We have also accomplished with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act the lowest student loan rate in 17 years. We have increased to historically high levels the Pell grant to make college more affordable.

Let us talk about secondary education. We have increased, by the President's request, on special ed, funding by about half a billion dollars. Think of all the schools that could be rebuilt in this country if we would fully fund special ed and free up those dollars that they can use for school construction.

How about dollars to the classroom? We passed that because we believe that we ought to get more dollars back to the classroom, back to our children, back to our teachers. Maybe we could afford to pay our teachers higher salaries. Maybe we could invest in technology and buy more computers, get those dollars back to the classroom and out of the Washington bureaucracy.

That is a fundamental difference. It is an honest difference with our friends on the left, but when they talk about the things that have not been done here I think the American people need to know about the things that have been done; things that are historic, things that are changing the way that this city operates.

There are a lot of challenges ahead of us. As we look down the road, we want to continue on the path. We have to win the war on drugs to make sure that our schools are safe and drug free, and that our children's minds and ambitions are not ruined by the scourge of illegal drugs.

We need to continue to improve our schools by getting more of that Federal money back home, back into the classroom, and seeing that those dollars are spent in the way that the local communities determine.

We need to save Social Security. We have made a commitment to spend 90 percent of the surplus, any surplus projected, to save Social Security not only for those who are receiving benefits today but for those who are paying in and expecting benefits in the future.

We are going to continue our fight to make government smaller and more efficient and improve the take-home pay of every working American.

These are honest differences that we have with our friends on the left, and they can get up and they can rant and rave about a do-nothing Congress but I want the American people to know, this may be a do-nothing liberal Congress but this is a Congress which has done a lot for the future of the American people.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from California (Mr. BECERRA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BECERRA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Dakota?

There was no objection.

LIBERTY AND LEARNING, EACH LEANING ON THE OTHER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, long ago, James Madison spoke of one of our most fundamental American propositions. That was liberty and learning, each leaning on the other. We cannot have a healthy democracy or any democracy without quality public education.

It is our job to show that education can rely on democracy. Let us put 100,000 new teachers in our classrooms.

This Congress has been one of the least productive in recent memory. While urgent, unmet needs confront American families in areas like education and health care, this Congress just dithers with inconsequential suspension bills and ideological dead letters like tax cuts that drain away the budget surplus.

In the State that I represent, Indiana, Indianapolis specifically, 29 percent of public schools are in serious need of repairs and 67 percent have outdated or inadequate facilities.

Back in January this year, Congressional Democrats and the administration laid out an extensive agenda to improve the quality of public education in this country. The Republicans spent the entire year blocking that agenda, preferring instead to focus on scandals that divert public attention. Now we are asking that as a bare minimum Congress begin providing funds to hire new teachers and to fix up our crumbling schools. By hiring new teachers, we will be able to reduce class sizes.

Research in Indiana and the State of Tennessee shows that reducing class size to 15 students in the early grades improves student achievements, particularly among low income and minority students in urban areas.

Public school enrollment in Indiana is expected to grow by almost 6 percent in the next decade. We desperately need more teachers to handle this growth. When I look at the overcrowding in the Indianapolis public school system, I can say the students there sure could use more teachers.

The need is overwhelming but this Congress has turned a blind eye to that need. Only now, confronted with extraordinary demand by the voters for better education, are the Republicans grudgingly coming forward to agree to more school funding. Even now, though, they are dragging their feet. Rather than funding new teachers, the Republican leaders want to spend the money on other things like school administration.

Mr. Speaker, we need teachers, not administrators; classrooms, not office complexes. Even worse, they tried to revive their anti-public school agenda. They want to use the District of Columbia as a guinea pig for experimenting with school vouchers. The D.C. public schools already are in distress but the Republicans want to drain away their funding and put it into private schools.

The proposition about dollars for classrooms was indeed another cruel hoax. My State of Indiana, under that proposal, stood to lose \$8.3 million in the process of a so-called block grant back to the State of Indiana.

Instead of spending our taxpayers' money on private schools, we must invest it wisely in public schools, where the vast majority of our children get their education.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for this Congress to get back to the business of helping to secure greater success for American families.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GOSS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GOSS).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Dakota?

There was no objection.

WILL THE PRESIDENT'S EDUCATION PROGRAMS IMPROVE EDUCATION OR IS IT AN ELECTION YEAR PROPOSAL?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask a question: Will the President's education programs improve education or is it an election year proposal?

Last night I shared my thoughts on school construction. I will review them quickly. The school construction program, as proposed by the President, takes half of the money and designates it to 100 urban poor districts, but does

nothing to designate to rural poor districts.

I found out today that the 100 urban poor districts can even go back for more money. They are not prohibited from getting two bites at the apple.

Let us say they do not. So we fund 200 or 300 school construction projects across America. That leaves 15,300 school districts with no help. That is not fair.

Now we have a proposal for what I call temporary teachers. Several years ago, we had a proposal for temporary cops. We funded 100,000 cops, and although I never really read whether we ever had 100,000 cops and there was a lot of discussion whether we ever met that goal, then when they hired them, we pulled the money back and stuck them with the bill.

That is the way this proposal is. It is not ongoing funding for teachers. It is temporary funding for teachers, and when they hire them, in a couple short years the money is pulled back and they have to pay the bill.

Is this fair, that the Federal Government entices spending at the local level and then pulls the money back? Who will get the money? Will it be another complicated, convoluted grant program? You bet it will. It will take consultants. They will make lots of money; grantsmen, they will make lots of money, but we will only have temporary teachers and we will only have construction in a few urban districts.

If the Federal Government wants to help basic education, we should send money in a fair and evenhanded way that treats urban, suburban and rural on an equal basis, because there is poor all the way up and down the ladder in size.

How do we do that? It is pretty simple. Forty years ago, this Congress, some Congress, passed special education and they said that all of the excess costs for this program, 40 percent of it will be paid for by the Federal Government. When we took over Congress in 1994, Congress was providing 6 percent instead of 40 percent.

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That is a huge shortfall. Now with this year's proposed budget, where we increased it half a billion this year and half a billion last year, we will be up to 12 percent. But that is not 40 percent. If we fully funded special education, the Los Angeles school district would get \$60 million of additional money, the St. Louis school district would get \$25 million of additional money, the York school district, a small rural district in Pennsylvania, would get \$1 million.

But we are \$10 billion short. Instead of paying the bill we promised, instead of funding the program that we started, we want to do new ones, because it is an election year. We want to send some money in some new convoluted way that will only reach a few of our school districts. We can more adequately fund vocational education, where we only spend \$1 billion and we

are passing laws to allow more immigrants to take the technology jobs which come from vocational education. Or we could get some Democrat support for Dollars to the Classroom, that only does away with state and Federal bureaucrats and puts the money in the schools, \$800 million, no new taxes. We could expand loan forgiveness programs that help put teachers where they are most needed.

We do not need new programs. We need to fund the ones that work, that do not cause more Federal bureaucrats, that you do not need grantsmen to apply for, that you do not need some complicated, convoluted process where the money can be funneled into the President's friends.

There are 15,600 school districts across America. They need a fair and evenhanded treatment. The President's proposal will reward his urban political friends and leave rural America with no school construction, with no new teachers, with no help, and not even a promise. That is not fair.

Tonight, I ask us to support funding education in an evenhanded, fair way, that funds education all across America, not just to the President's friends.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time previously allotted to the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS REGARDING AGRICULTURE AND EDUCATION MUST BE DEALT WITH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, before the 105th Congress adjourns, we must be certain we conclude all of the unfinished business before this Congress, especially in the area of agriculture and in education.

Looking at agriculture, it is a travesty that the appropriations process has zeroed out the \$60 million for funds for rural America which provides important capital for rural economic development. This funding should be reinstated. It is important to recognize that the long-term economic health of rural America depends on a broad and diverse economic base which requires investment in agriculture, rural busi-

nesses, infrastructure, housing stock and community facilities.

The availability of credit is a crucial factor in the success or failure of all small farmers, especially family farmers; both and large and small, I must say, also suffer from the failure of having availability of credit.

In the 1996 farm bill, those persons who, for whatever reason, had to renegotiate their credit, whether one time or two times, were denied the opportunity to get another direct loan or another guaranteed loan. That was regardless of whether it was from disaster or whether it was from having to refinance a loan because they had an overpriced or poor crop, and also if it was because they had civil rights actions, they are being denied, even after the government discriminated against them and found they did. The 1996 farm bill says that regardless of whatever the cause, that farmer cannot get a farm loan.

Now, the USDA farm program was to be the lender of last resort, and producers who have depended on that commitment from the United States Department of Agriculture now find they can neither have a guaranteed loan nor a direct loan.

There is still an opportunity, I understand, before we adjourn to adopt the Senate language which will allow that debt forgiveness and to exclude the opportunity for consolidation or rescheduling or reamortization or referrals of the loan as being bars or barriers from them getting a second loan. We hope the negotiators will take that opportunity.

In addition in the 105th Congress also the appropriators have language in there that will allow for the statute of limitations not to be a barrier to the black farmers who have had complaints against the United States Department of Agriculture, even after the department has acknowledged that they indeed did discriminate.

Now, turning to education, I am from a rural area, and I would want to tell the last speaker that I find that the President's bill calling for 100,000 teachers and reducing the size of classrooms would be beneficial to North Carolina and to my district where I come from. We come from a district that is looking for the opportunity of expanding and recruiting more teachers, and it would certainly be beneficial to reduce the class size, because even in North Carolina, we have found when you reduce the class size, students do better. They achieve better. There indeed is equal opportunity of showing that teachers teach better when they have smaller classes.

As far as the construction loans, my state recently passed bond construction for new schools so the monies that would come from the Federal Government would be a supplement. It would certainly go a long ways toward enhancing the opportunity to make sure we remove the dilapidated buildings and schools.